

**OUR IDEALS  
AND  
PRINCIPLES**

**DEVAPROSAD MITRA**

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Devaprosad Mitra (1902-1978) had dedicated his heart and soul to the service of the Brahmo Samaj. There was no activity or organisation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj with which he was not actively connected. He took keen interest in the activities of all sections of the Brahmo Samaj all over India and similar movements in India and abroad. An indefatigable worker with a remarkable grasp over the minutest detail, he was at the same time a man of calm and serene fortitude in the face of trials and tribulations. His deep devotion and dependence on God supplied the inner strength to all his work.

Extracts from two of his addresses are published in this booklet.

## OUR IDEALS AND PRINCIPLES AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEM

What are our ideals and principles?

The Brahma Samaj believes in one God who is without a second, who is the creator, sustainer and regulator of the world. He is almighty, all-merciful, omnipotent and omniscient. His love and grace pervades the sky, the earth and water.

It is our duty and privilege to try to realise His grace and mercy as He is revealing Himself in the outer world, the human life, the human mind, and to deepen that realisation by holding communion with Him.

The Brahma Samaj does not accept any scripture as infallible and the only means to salvation but respects them as repositories of spiritual experiences of sages and *sadhakas* of different times and countries.

The Brahma Samaj does not accept any mediator between God and man, does not accept any *Guru* as infallible, but believes that all men may worship God directly in spirit and love, and have direct communion with the All-merciful Father, if the worshipper practises holiness and purity in life, absolves himself from frailties and sin through repentance, and prays to God with reverence and humility and true supplication.

The Brahma Samaj believes that the true worship lies not in blindly following rituals but in deep abiding faith in God, true *bhakti* in Him and doing His-will in all matters of our lives.

The Brahma Samaj believes that spiritual life is based upon the practice of truth, love and purity every moment of our lives.

The Brahma Samaj urges upon all, not only to accept Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man as ideals of life, but to practise those ideals thoroughly and sincerely, throughout life—to accept all men as brothers, as our relations, all men and women of

all caste, creed or colour—and to engage in their well-being with love and kindness.

The Brahmo Samaj urges upon all to practise *dharmasadhana*, spiritual endeavour, not through multiplicity of rituals, but through purity and holiness in life, bhakti—reverence—and gratitude to the All-merciful Father, and through love and selfless service for the welfare of all.

These are the ideals of the Brahmo Samaj: faith in God, love and service for all beings.

What is the way by which we can be true Brahmos? What is the method or path which will enable us to attain spiritual life?

The only way is worship of God.

This worship is performed not by any set rituals, not by chanting of mantras, not by the correctness of their intonation, not by quoting scriptures—but by throwing oneself completely at God's love and mercy with humility and self-abnegation.

Describing *upasana* Rammohun Roy said in his *Vedantagrantha : Parena cha sabdasya*

*tadvidhyam bhuyastastwanubandha*—Love for God and His beings and doing work conducive to this love—these are the main methods of *upasana*.

Devendranath Tagore said : *Tasmin pritiistasya prtyakaryasadhanancha tadupasanameva*—Loving God and doing work dear to Him is *upasana*.

Let us analyse further.

*Tasmin priti*, loving God : how to deepen our love for God ?

It is difficult to love somebody whom we do not know. But our love naturally goes to persons whom we know to be our friends and benefactors, whose love we can feel in our lives. In a child we see that the infant gets food and shelter from its mother and comes to know her touch and to love her. Gradually this love deepens, and the child loves to be with its mother and to repeat her name over and over. Later, the child, now grown to youth, does not need to be with the mother, but the mere thought of the mother fills his mind with love and reverence.

Have we not experienced this in our own lives? Does not, even today, when our mothers are dead a long time ago, the mere thinking about our mothers bring about a surge of love, gratitude and holiness in our minds?

This sentiment is hundredfold for the Divine Mother or Father. He is our loving benefactor. He is our saviour, our shelter and refuge in moments of stress and strain, in despair and calamities, in pain, suffering and in death.

Keshub Chunder Sen advises us to remember instances of revelations of Divine Mercy in our lives. As we shall be remembering His mercy, our love and gratitude will swell forth and go out to Him.

*Tasya prtyakaryasadhanancha* : This *prtya karya* can be done in two ways—(a) in reference to our own lives : the practice of purity, selflessness, control of all desires, *anasakti* ; (b) towards others : *seva*, welfare, love and service.

The history of the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj is luminous with the brightness of love and



service for others, as part of their religion, as part of their worship.

This is our heritage—invaluable and inspiring—handed down to us by our predecessors. It is now our turn to carry on the same ideals, the same tradition, with zeal and earnestness.

Brothers and sisters, let us take the vow to protect, maintain and follow our glorious heritage of love and service—love for God and service—to our fellow men—with earnestness and sincerity, with all the strength of our body, mind and soul, with all the zeal and energy that we can muster.

We pray to God to bless us all and to give us strength to follow the ideals.

## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

In a pilgrimage we find that pilgrims go together in fellowship and fraternal goodwill ; each is influenced by the fervour and *bhakti* of the other pilgrims ; they feel strengthened by the warm feeling that all of them are fellow-travellers on the same path and going to the same goal. From a pilgrimage, the pilgrims come back with new enthusiasm, new hope and renewed inspiration. Let us imbibe the same spirit of new inspiration from this Brahma Conference, from the meeting together of fellow believers, seeking joy and bliss in communion with our Father and His guidance in the problems of our lives, both individual and social.

When we look around us at the condition of most of the Brahma Samajes all over India, as we analyse carefully our own lives, we feel depressed and despondent about our future. We seem to have lost the fervour and *bhakti* of our forefathers, we seem to have failed utterly to kindle the light of enthusiasm

in the hearts of the younger generation, we ourselves seem to be losing hope.

But, friends, we must remind us again and again that our Divine Father never forsakes His children. Whenever we cry out to Him for His mercy and help in our distress and despair, He gives us shelter and refuge and pours out new hope and new strength into our hearts.

Children who are often afraid of darkness and fearful things feel new strength when they hold their father's hand. Strengthened by the presence of their father, they easily conquer fear. In our childhood days we have found that the presence of our parents, even recalling them, often protected us from many temptations. Even in our mature years, have we not experienced that the memory of our parents brings to us a feeling of sacredness which keeps us away from many base and impure things, many temptations and falls? Friends, if the memory of our earthly father or mother brings about such an effect on us, we may very well think what a purifying and invigorating and

strengthening effect will the remembrance of God bring to our lives.

In India we have heard of *mantra-shakti*, how the *japa* of a *mantra* kindles as it were tremendous power in an ordinary person and enables him to perform feats of extraordinary strength. Friends, this is not a mere tale. Have we not seen how our forefathers have achieved marvels in their lives, have brought new light and new life in the whole country? It was only possible through the *shakti*, the power, which the Lord's name infused into them. It was only possible because they constantly felt God's strength and guidance in their work.

Friends, the only way to bring about new life and energy in the Brahma movement, nay not only in the Brahma movement but in the whole world, is the practice of the presence of God, the constant practice of the presence of God. All of us know what the practice of the presence of God did to Brother Lawrence,—what a wonderful life, what a wonderful submission to dependence on God's will it brought

to him. This wonderful life may be ours for the asking if we are sincere enough. This is an experience open to all who engages himself in sincere endeavour with humility and submission, with love and goodwill towards all, and with complete self-surrender.

Friends, let us shake off this indifference which seems to be overpowering us. Let us open up our hearts, and with all humility and lowliness surrender ourselves wholly and unreservedly to God's mercy. Let us put away all selfishness, all greed, all pride—whether of money, prestige or intellect—and beseech the Lord to cleanse our hearts and purify us, and to infuse new life in every one of us.

May God bless us with his grace.

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All-India Brahma Conference, Bombay, 1970